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Title: Consumer Engage The Nexus of Brand Loyalty, Perceived Quality, and Brand Evangelism

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Consumer Engagement with Branded Mobile Applications: The Nexus of Brand Loyalty, Perceived Quality, and Brand Evangelism

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Abstract

This study aims to examine consumer engagement with branded mobile applications (apps) in terms of the impacts of brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand evangelism. The partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach was utilized for data analysis. This study confirmed that perceived quality had a positive impact on brand loyalty in consumer engagement with branded mobile apps. Consumers would consider specific branded mobile apps as their first choice and are loyal when they are of high quality. They also believe that branded mobile apps will be functional and dependable when used. As a result, they will not download other branded mobile apps that are similar to their preferred brand that are available at the online store. Marketers should emphasize the importance of brand loyalty in fostering brand evangelism among consumers, as perceived quality influences consumer brand loyalty, resulting in an increase in branded mobile apps' consumer brand evangelism. The future research direction is also provided.

Keywords: *Perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand evangelism, mobile, consumer.*

1. Introduction

In the contemporary competitive business environment, strategic decisions play a decisive role in branded mobile companies' future and survival. Consumers globally are increasingly using social media and mobile apps. Mobile users surpass 5.22 billion users globally, and global mobile commerce sales are projected to reach \$3.56 trillion in 2021 ("Mobile Commerce Growth (2017–2028)," 2024). This confirms the potential of branded mobile businesses globally. Technology caters to the young and older populations alike. According to Chanyawudhiwan and Mingsiritham (2022), technology can enrich the lives of consumers and can enhance the self-esteem of consumers of all ages. Moreover, as the world is entering the web 4.0 revolution mobile technologies are inculcating in every aspect of our lives. For instance, the use of media technology has created its mark on education, e-commerce, and the online economy (Herawati et al., 2022). Mobile technology has made a huge impact on consumer's everyday life, has shrunk long distances and people can discuss and participate virtually by saving time and money (Prahani, Bin Amiruddin, Jatmiko, Suprpto, & Amelia, 2022). However, the perceived quality of branded mobile phones can impact how consumers talk about their phone brands.

Organizations need to build capacity to solve strategic issues by employing frameworks developed specifically for quality image and value-building issues in branded mobile phone companies. According to Feng, Zhang, and Tang (2015), understanding organizational sales and development to understand consumer behavior is vital. Consumers not only purchase online and spend a lot of time browsing shopping websites to find what they can have at the best price available. Furthermore, these consumers persuade other consumers through their reviews of products. They share their thoughts online and which can impact the decision-making of current or potential consumers. Brand managers need to understand all the factors which can impact the brand evangelism of their consumers. Widodo and Ginting (2024) specify that the quality of interaction, physical environment & result, the brand image, brand symbolism, and customer satisfaction positively impact brand evangelism. Quality attributes to smooth running of processes, satisfied employees, and customers resulting in increased brand image and brand value. Therefore, it needs to investigate how perceived quality impacts the brand evangelism of consumers through loyalty. Al Nawas, Altarifi, and Ghantous (2021) suggest that psychology confirms consumers' emotions and cognition impact human behavior and impact attitude. To manage the organizational strategy and decision-making processes, consumer attitude is studied to understand consumer demands, perceptions, and preferences. The quality perception leads to loyal consumers that repurchase brands, further increasing consumer satisfaction and value building. Previous research has documented the relationship between quality and loyalty (Arora & Narula, 2018). According to Zhou et al. (2021), the service quality impacts the loyalty intention of the consumers. The loyalty of consumers develops consumer satisfaction and brand image (Omar, Mohsen, Tsimonis, Oozeerally, & Hsu, 2021). The objective of the study is to examine the impacts of brand loyalty on perceived quality and brand evangelism among branded mobile consumers in Pakistan. The research questions of this current study is:

RQ1: What are the impacts of brand loyalty on perceived quality and brand evangelism among branded mobile consumers?

Al Nawas et al. (2021) stated that loyalty leads to brand evangelism. However, there is not much research available on how brand loyalty will come out in the presence of perceived quality and brand evangelism relationships. Bhandari, Bhattarai, and Mulholland (2024) establish the enhanced influence of online brand community on brand evangelism. Moreover, there is limited research available on what factors impact and build consumer brand evangelism specifically in the branded mobile industry. Hence, the purpose of the study is to understand the mediating role of brand loyalty between consumers' perception of quality and their brand evangelism in the branded mobile industry of Pakistan. The companies in Pakistan may benefit from the brand loyalty of the consumers by improving the perceived quality and finally can attain the brand evangelism. The research improves significant contributions by extending the understanding of brand dynamics, particularly in the context of perceived quality and brand loyalty while building strong brand evangelism. Moreover, the study uses a comprehensive pathway to the brand evangelism, perceiving beyond traditional measures, and provides guidance for future research, extending its obligation to development towards the field of consumer behavior and branding. Furthermore, the paper explores the review of literature followed by the research framework, the statistical model, results and discussion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Perceived quality

Consumer perception influences firm price and consumer-level product decisions (purchase decisions). Consumers perceive the quality of a product from its prices (Bang, Smith, Park, & Lee,

2025). Therefore, to manage consumer perception, it is important to understand perceived quality and its dynamics. Perceived quality is defined as the customer's perception and evaluation of a brand's performance through intrinsic and extrinsic cues (Asshidin, Abidin, & Borhan, 2016). Consumers' consumption is influenced by the attitude and behaviors of their friends, reference groups, culture, and social class. Therefore, it is inferred that they can be influenced to purchase certain brands.

Perceived quality is a well-researched area and is studied in various disciplines such as patient complaint (Nguyen, 2023), emergency obstetric care and satisfaction (Kim et al., 2022), civic engagement (Bang et al., 2025), and packaging design (Nascimento et al., 2022). Lee and Workman (2021) identified that men were more loyal than females when it came to early adopters of the brand. Previous research documents a plethora of research that confirms the relationship between perceived quality and loyalty (Asnawi, Awang, Afthanorhan, Mohamad, & Karim, 2019). Rizqiyah (2024) provides that Service Quality influence the Customer Loyalty. There are many factors that build the brand evangelism behaviors in consumers. Perceived quality impact needs to be studied to understand the mechanisms of brand evangelism building in consumers in the branded mobile industry. Thus, this study posited that:

H₁: Perceived quality is positively associated with brand loyalty.

H₂: Perceived quality is positively associated with brand evangelism.

2.2 Loyalty

The service quality impacts the loyalty intention of the consumers (Zhou et al., 2021). Another study found that perceived service quality has an effect on loyalty intentions (Su, Nguyen-Phuoc, & Johnson, 2021). Gender differences are also studied related to loyalty behaviors in various industries. According to Lee and Workman (2021), men are more loyal to brands and resist brand switching behaviors if they perceive higher product quality in their favored brands. Indeed, quality impacts loyalty (Su et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2021). However, Omar et al. (2021) noted that service quality has a significant impact on customer satisfaction which impacts customer loyalty. Another researcher identified that satisfaction plays a mediating role between quality and loyalty (Marimon, Mas-Machuca, & Llach, 2021). (Karim & Rabiul, 2024) ascertain that customer loyalty has a positive association with word of mouth. Khawaj, Kazmi, Jan, and Padlee (2024) established that brand satisfaction mediates the relationship between customer personality, brand personality, and service brand evangelism. A major previous research stream on the topic concludes that satisfaction is the outcome of perceived quality and loyalty development (Lubis, Dalimunthe, Absah, & Fawzee, 2021). Areas of investigation include mobile banking (Zhou et al., 2021), mobile service shopping quality (Omar et al., 2021), transport industry (Su et al., 2021), grocery retail (Sanchez-Gonzalez, Gil-Saura, & Ruiz-Molina, 2022) and retail industry (Menidjel, Bilgihan, & Benhabib, 2021). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is put forth:

H₃: Brand loyalty is positively associated with brand evangelism.

2.3 Evangelism

Consumer purchases are influenced by other consumers' attitudes and how others behave related to these products (Bang et al., 2025). Hence, positive product advocacy can persuade consumers to purchase these brands. Lee and Workman (2021) confirmed that even the mere presence of people can impact consumer purchase decision-making processes. Evangelism is an emotion-based concept, and emotional components of the relationship quality led to loyalty (Al Nawas et al., 2021). Brand evangelism is defined as the passionate support of brand evangelists by communicating the brand positively and advocating for the brand through their positive behavior

for the evangelized brand (P. Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013). The main difference between the word of mouth and brand evangelism is that word of mouth needs objective and rational facts to spread. Brand evangelists are more emotionally attached to the brand (Al Nawas et al., 2021). Word of mouth is mostly a knowledgeable recommendation based on experience and definite facts. Brand evangelism is a knowledgeable recommendation based on emotional attachment with the brand to convert the person into a brand consumer. The brand evangelist impacts the consumers emotionally and persuades them to select their evangelized products due to their own beliefs and emotional attachment. According to Al Nawas et al. (2021), emotions are the footholds for brand evangelism. If one wants to generate brand evangelism in consumers, they have to increase the emotional components of the consumer-brand relationship for the customers. Al-Saber, Al-Hussainan, Al-Shamali, and Al-Kandari (2024) observes a significant relationship among Brand Identification, Symbolism, and Evangelism.

Evangelism is studied in different industries and in different disciplines for instance green brands and loyalty (Panda et al., 2020), brand trust in the tourism industry (Nkoulou Mvondo, Jing, Hussain, Jin, & Raza, 2022), value co-creation (Harrigan, Roy, & Chen, 2021), automobiles industry (Choudhury, Mishra, & Mohanty, 2019), and smartphones (Anggraini, 2018). Consumers persuade other consumers to buy, and previous research identified that gender differences in this regard are not substantial. According to Lee and Workman (2021), both genders are equally likely to inform others about their favorite brands. However, it is clear that emotional relationship quality will impact brand evangelism (Al Nawas et al., 2021). Hamouda and Aissaoui (2024) studies the green industry and affirms that the brand loyalty generates a positive brand evangelism from consumers. Therefore, creating quality perceptions, and consumer loyalty for your brands will develop brand evangelism behaviors in consumers. Hence, it is postulated that

H4: Brand loyalty mediates the relationship between perceived quality and brand evangelism

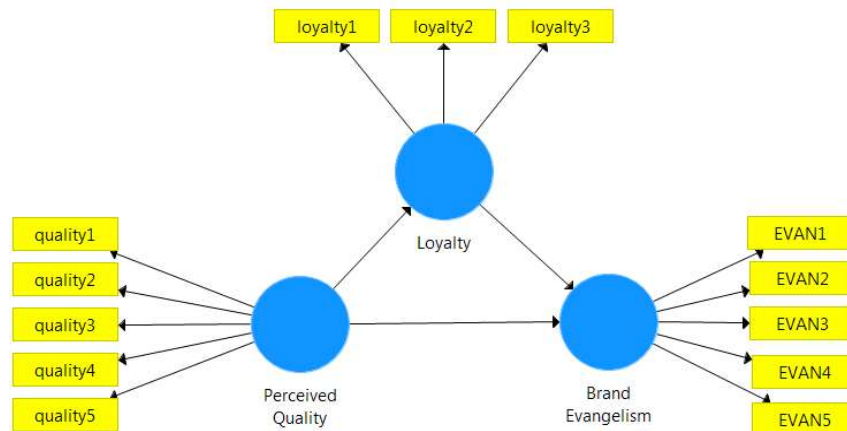


Figure 1. Research Model

Figure 1 depicts the study's conceptual framework. The current study includes three variables. The study's independent variable is perceived quality. Brand evangelism is the research's dependent variable. Brand loyalty functions as a bridge between perceived quality and brand evangelism.

3. Research Methodology

The present study type is descriptive, and data is gathered using the primary survey method. The purposive sampling technique was used to collect data. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the

200 samples. The mean gender is 1.170 which means that there is a greater number of respondents who are males in this data set. Most of the respondents fall in the age bracket of 25 to 35 years old. The highest education level is a bachelor's degree (2.140) and most of the respondents are single (1.570). Data analysis was carried out using the PLS-SEM technique via the Smart PLS 3.3.9 software.

The questionnaires were self-administered to 230 respondents at different shopping centers and malls where there is a high influx of people with mobile phones. The twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi were selected as these are cosmopolitan cities of Pakistan. Adult consumers who use branded mobile phones are the target of this study. The questionnaire was divided into two parts one part pertains to the demographic information and the other part is composed of construct items. The scales of the study are adapted with minor changes. The scale of brand evangelism is from (Matzler, Pichler, & Hemetsberger, 2007), and the scales of perceived quality and loyalty are taken from (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000). The purposive sampling technique will be used to collect data. The final data analysis was done using the final 200 questionnaires while 30 questionnaires were discarded due to various issues in response. For the current study, data analysis is carried out using the PLS-SEM technique. Data will be analyzed using the smart PLS software.

4. Results

PLS-SEM aids in the evaluation of complex and comprehensive models that can disregard the normal distribution of data assumptions. The PLS-SEM approach can handle double mediation or complex studies with several moderators. In addition, the PLS-SEM can handle both larger samples and smaller data sets, and it has a higher level of robustness in these situations (Sarstedt, Ringle, & Hair, 2021). PLS-SEM analyses data in two steps. The first step analyses the outer model or measurement model (Hair Jr, Howard, & Nitzl, 2020) and the estimations of the outer model's selected constructs were evaluated for this purpose. The structural model was analyzed in the second step. The outer model's reliability was tested using the reliability test in PLS-SEM.

4.1 Common method bias (CMB)

Harman's single factor test was used to test common method bias prior to assessing the measurement model. The variance percentage is 33.205, which is less than the recommended threshold of 50%. This confirms that the data contains no common method bias. The inner variance inflation factors (VIFs) of all constructs were determined using a collinearity test. All of the VIFs are less than the accepted 3.3 value (see Table 1), proving that the current model is free of common method bias.

4.2 Measurement model

The measurement model was evaluated in terms of internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the construct measures. The instruments' internal consistency reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability to see if they consistently measured the relevant concepts (Hair Jr et al., 2020). All using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeded the threshold value of 0.70, indicating that the data had satisfactory internal reliability (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability and Validity Analysis

Items	Factor Loading	α	CR	AVE	VIF
Brand Evangelism		0.792	0.881	0.598	
EVAN1	0.750				1.826
EVAN2	0.730				2.324
EVAN3	0.784				1.867
EVAN4	0.822				1.514
EVAN5	0.778				1.543
Loyalty		0.851	0.823	0.609	
loyalty1	0.711				1.405
loyalty2	0.823				1.301
loyalty3	0.802				1.349
Perceived Quality		0.870	0.902	0.649	
Quality1	0.893				3.491
Quality2	0.807				2.179
Quality3	0.764				1.918
Quality4	0.783				2.575
Quality5	0.773				1.354

Note. Composite Reliability (CR); Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

In order to quantify the interrelationships between multiple indicators measuring the same construct, convergent validity was determined by ensuring that the item loadings were 0.70 or higher and the average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 1 confirms these conditions. Consequently, the model's convergent validity was satisfactory. The heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) method was then used to assess the constructs' discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). Table 2 specifies that HTMT values are all less than 0.85, with no confidence intervals above 1.00. Therefore, discriminant validity is sufficient.

Table 2. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Variable	Brand Evangelism	Loyalty	Perceived Quality
Brand Evangelism	0.773		
Loyalty	0.524	0.780	
Perceived Quality	0.333	0.567	0.806

4.3 Structural model

After establishing the reliability and validity of the construct measures, 5,000 samples were bootstrapped to test the structural model's hypothesized relationships as shown in Figure 1. Path coefficient and R^2 significance are used to test the structural model (Ong & Puteh, 2017; Wasko & Faraj, 2005). Specifically, perceived quality has a significant impact on brand loyalty ($\beta_1 = 0.454$, t -value = 7.799, p -value < 0.001). Hence, H_1 is supported. Furthermore, H_2 evaluates whether perceived quality has a significant impact on brand evangelism. In a similar manner, H_2 is supported by a positive and significant path coefficient of $\beta_2 = 0.199$, t -value = 2.929, at p -value < 0.001. Henceforth, the results show that perceived quality has a significant impact on brand

evangelism. The subsequent hypothesis, H3 that brand loyalty has a significant impact on brand evangelism is also significant ($\beta_3 = 0.407$, t -value = 5.243, p -value < 0.001). Accordingly, H3 is supported. Overall, the R^2 of brand loyalty is 0.206, and the R^2 of brand evangelism is 0.211, indicating the dependent variable was moderately accounted for by the independent variables in their effects. These findings are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Path coefficients

Relationships	β	SE	t -value	p -value	LLCI	ULCI
Perceived Quality ---> Loyalty	0.454*	0.058	7.799	0.000	0.327	0.565
Perceived Quality ---> Brand Evangelism	0.199*	0.096	2.929	0.000	0.151	0.304
Loyalty ---> Brand Evangelism	0.407*	0.078	5.243	0.000	0.242	0.542

Note. Standard Error (SE); Lower Limit Confidence Interval (LLCI); Upper Limit Confidence Interval (ULCI).

4.4 Mediation Analysis

A mediation analysis is carried out to determine the role of brand loyalty in mediating the relationship between perceived quality and brand evangelism using Preacher and Hayes's (2008) approach for mediation. Table 4 specific indirect effect of perceived quality on brand evangelism through brand loyalty is found significant (H_3 : $\beta = 0.184$, $t = 3.892$, $p < 0.001$). This shows that brand loyalty is mediating the relationship between perceived quality and brand evangelism. The direct effect of perceived quality with the inclusion of the mediating variable brand loyalty, the impact on brand evangelism became insignificant ($\beta = 0.099$, $t = 1.080$, $p < 0.01$). This result shows that the relationship between perceived quality and brand evangelism is fully mediated by brand loyalty. The results revealed that the total effect of perceived quality on brand evangelism is significant ($\beta = 0.283$, $t = 4.345$, $p < 0.001$). This further confirms that the relationship between perceived and brand evangelism is partially mediated by brand loyalty. Hence H_4 is proved.

Table 4. Mediation Analysis

Total Effect		Direct Effect		Indirect Effects	
Perceived Quality--Brand Evangelism		Perceived Quality--Brand Evangelism		Perceived Quality--Brand Evangelism	
β	p -value	β	p -value	β	p -value
0.283	0.000	0.099	0.008	0.184	0.000

5. Discussion

The findings confirmed that brand loyalty acts as a link between perceived quality and brand evangelism. As a result, when it comes to evangelizing for branded mobile brands, consumers consider the perceived quality of mobiles to be a critical factor. Consumers who impart knowledge see knowledge sharing as a way to associate authority and authenticate their personalities. As a result, consumers will ensure that whatever they advocate is of high quality and genuine. This will lead to them becoming brand loyal consumers of branded mobile companies.

5.1 Implications

The concept of brand evangelism is new, and more research is needed both broadly and specifically in Pakistan's branded mobile phone sector. The findings confirmed that brand loyalty acts as a link

between perceived quality and brand evangelism. Consumers consider the perceived quality of mobiles to be a critical factor when it comes to evangelizing branded mobile brands. Knowledge-sharing consumers see it as a way to establish authority and authenticate themselves. Marketers need to ensure that what they promote is genuine and high-quality. Companies' brand managers must care about the quality of their products if they want loyal customers and customers who persuade others to buy their advocated brand. As a result, mobile brand customers will become loyal to the marketers' brands.

Marketers should also emphasize the importance of brand loyalty in fostering brand evangelism in branded mobile consumers, as perceived quality influences consumer brand loyalty, resulting in an increase in branded mobile consumer brand evangelism. This demonstrates that cultivating brand-loyal customers raises consumer perceived quality, which leads to an increase in consumer brand evangelism. Consumers will persuade other consumers to purchase the brand if their perception of quality improves as a result of their brand loyalty behavior; thus, brand managers and strategists must develop brand loyalty behavior in order to increase consumer brand evangelism. Business strategy application issues can be attributed to large, medium, or small organizations, making them applicable to all of these organizations for better management.

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